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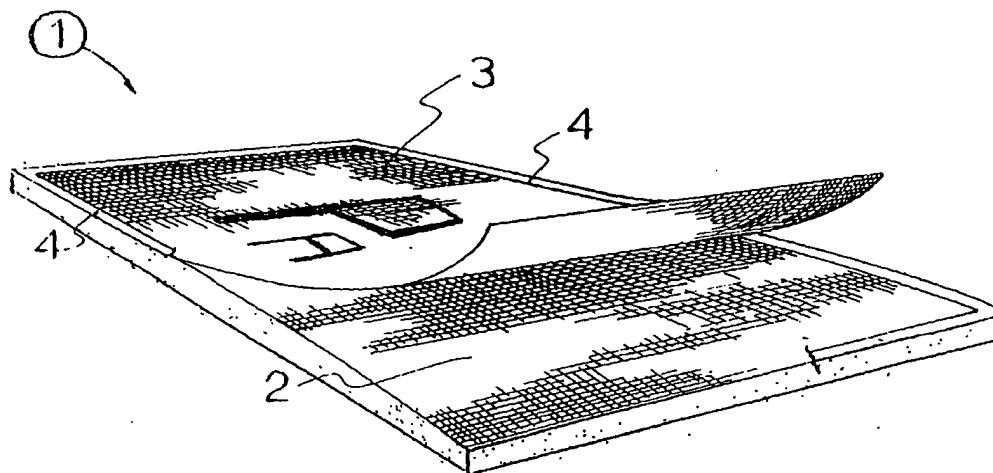
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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: A MAT



(57) Abstract: A 2-layer mat is disclosed that finds especial, but not limiting, use as a table, counter or floor mat. The mat (1) consists of a first layer (4) of woven polyester material laminated (by heat, adhesive, ultrasonic sealing or any combination thereof) to a second layer (2) of a sponge material. Optionally, the upper surface of the first layer may carry a printed brand or other promotional message.

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TITLE: A MAT

THIS INVENTION relates to a mat. In particular, it is directed to a mat that finds especial, but not limiting, use as a table, counter or floor mat.

5 A product used by the hospitality industry, such as hotels, clubs and restaurants, for absorbing split liquids on bar tops is generally a strip of material, often referred to as a runner. Similarly, such a runner can be used as a floor mat, to be used in "wet" areas such as toilets, bathrooms, rest rooms, etc., whereby it absorbs any water spilt from a wash basin and the like. This strip of material is manufactured from cotton towelling which, optionally,
10 may carry a printed brand or other promotional message.

Acknowledged problems with this type of cotton towelling runner include:

once saturated with water or other liquid, seepage occurs to the surface on which the runner is placed, leading to staining of that surface;

15 towelling readily wrinkles and bunches up leading to an unsightly appearance on the work surface;

towelling tends to lose colour, shrink and crease when washed, further detracting from the appearance of the runner and thus presentation of the brand or other promotional message; and

the general tendency for the runner to slip on the work surface.

20 One prior art attempt to overcome a number of these problems is disclosed in International Patent Application No. PCT/AU99/00751 wherein a multi-layer

composite sheet is provided comprising a lower non-slip backing layer, an upper liquid-absorbent textile surface and an intermediate layer that joins the backing layer and textile surface together. Typically, the lower layer is manufactured from a non-slip material such as nitrile rubber, and the upper
5 textile surface is formed from a polyester felt.

However, such a prior art mat suffers from a number of disadvantages which include:

only spillages on the upper textile surface can be absorbed; any spillages outside of the footprint of the mat on the work surface cannot
10 be absorbed by the mat as the lower rubber layer is essentially impervious to liquid;

absorbency of the mat is limited to the thin upper layer of polyester felt;

hand washing and/or rinsing of the mat is difficult because the lower rubber layer is waterproof and complete removal of the bacteria that
15 tends to remain trapped between the rubber and the felt is unlikely; if not removed, this bacteria subsequently leads to offensive smells and renders the entire mat non-hygienic;

machine washing is thus necessary to obtain a thorough wash to remove any bacteria but (a) polyester felt tends to pill on washing which
20 consequently detracts from the overall appearance of the mat and (b) excessive washing shortens the useful life of the mat.

It is thus a general object to overcome, or at least ameliorate, one or more of the afore-mentioned disadvantages of the prior art mat.

According to the present invention, there is provided a mat for use as a table, counter or floor mat, said mat consisting of:

a first layer having an upper surface and a lower surface, said first layer being adapted to accept a marking viewable on said upper surface; and

5 a second layer having an upper surface and a lower surface, said upper surface of said second layer being bonded to said lower surface of said first layer;

wherein each of said first layer and said second layer is adapted to absorb liquid.

10 Preferably, said second layer is manufactured from a sponge-like material.

Preferably, said first layer is manufactured from a polyester material.

In one embodiment of the present invention, said polyester material is a polyester felt.

15 In a second embodiment of the present invention, said polyester material is a woven polyester.

The bonding of said upper surface of said second layer to said lower surface of said first layer can be undertaken by any means known to be suitable in the art, including the use of heat, adhesive, ultrasonic sealing or any combination thereof.

Similarly, the application of said marking (which includes text, graphic or any combination thereof) can be undertaken by any means known to be suitable in the art including, for example, sublimation textile printing.

5 A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying FIG. 1 which illustrates a mat in partly exploded form.

10 The mat (1) consists of a first layer (4) of woven polyester material laminated to a second layer (2) of a sponge material. The upper surface (3) of the first layer (4) has printed thereon, by any known suitable textile printing process, the graphic *PA*. Typical dimensions for a mat that would be used as a bar runner are: 90cms long; 25cms wide; depth of sponge 3mm; depth of polyester layer 1mm.

The mat of the present invention offers a number of advantages which include:

15 simple movement of the mat will enable any spillage outside of the footprint of the mat to be absorbed;

as the mat is more flexible and more liquid pervious than a rubber backed mat, machine washing is not essential - hand washing can be sufficient; also it is easier to remove any bacteria that may be present,
20 thus resulting in a more hygienic mat;

as the capillaries of the sponge are larger than those of the woven polyester, the liquid absorbed by the sponge migrates to the top of the sponge just under the woven polyester, thus leaving the lower surface

of the sponge and the upper polyester layer dry, leading to a longer use of the mat before it is necessary to clean same;

with the reduction in required frequency of cleaning, the product will maintain its fresh appearance for longer than prior art mats;

5 also, with decreased frequency of washing, any pilling of the upper layer will be reduced, once again maintaining the appearance of the mat and extending its life.

10 It will be appreciated that the above described embodiment is only an exemplification of the various aspects of the present invention and that modifications and alterations can be made thereto without departing from the inventive concept as defined in the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A mat for use as a table, counter or floor mat, said mat consisting of:

5 a first layer having an upper surface and a lower surface, said first layer being adapted to accept a marking viewable on said upper surface; and

a second layer having an upper surface and a lower surface, said upper surface of said second layer being bonded to said lower surface of said first layer;

10 wherein each of said first layer and said second layer is adapted to absorb liquid.

2. A mat as defined in Claim 1 wherein said second layer is manufactured from a sponge-like material.

3. A mat as defined in Claim 1 or Claim 2 wherein said first layer is manufactured from a polyester material.

- 15 4. A mat as defined in Claim 3 wherein said polyester material is a polyester felt.

5. A mat as defined in Claim 3 wherein said polyester material is a woven polyester.

- 20 6. A mat as defined in any one of Claims 1 to 5 wherein said first layer includes a said marking viewable on said upper surface.

7. A method of manufacturing a mat, said mat as defined in any one of Claims 1 to 7, whereby said method includes bonding said upper surface of said second layer to said lower surface of said first layer by a process selected from a group that includes use of heat, adhesive, ultrasonic sealing or any combination thereof.

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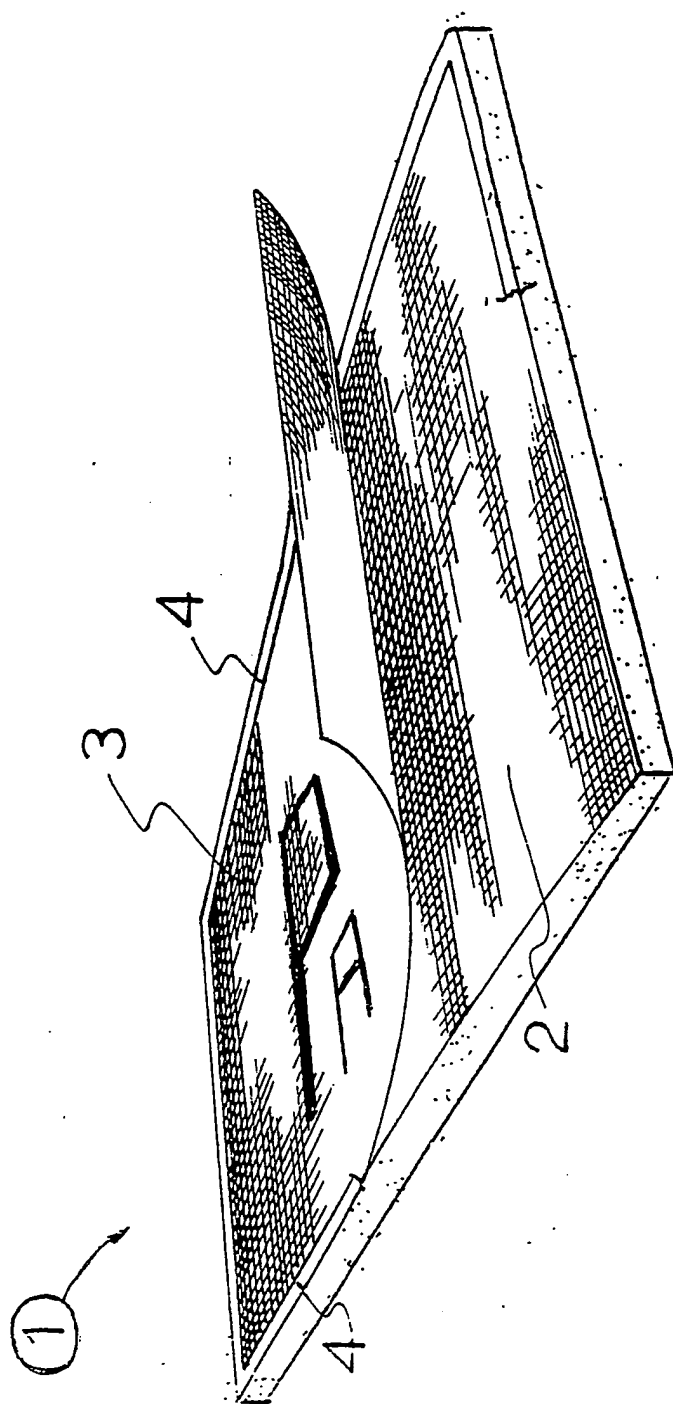


FIG. 1.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched AU:IPC B32B 31/26		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) DWPI:IPC A47G 23/03, 27/02 A47L 13/16 B32B 5/18, 27/36 and layer, bond, absorb, sponge, polyester		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X, Y	EP 826811 A (AHLSTROM LYSTIL SA) 4 March 1998 Whole document	1 - 7
X, Y	WO 93/22485 A (MINNESOTA MINING AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY) 11 November 1993 Whole document	1 - 7
X, Y	EP 262 817 B (KIMBERLEY-CLARK LIMITED) 21 November 1991 Whole document	1 - 7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex		
<p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p>		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 18 December 2003		Date of mailing of the international search report 29 DEC 2003
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaaustralia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929		Authorized officer VENKAT IYER Telephone No : (02) 6283 2144

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International application No.

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C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	GB 2 360 248 A (WALK OFF MATS LIMITED) 19 September 2001 Whole document	1 - 7
Y	WO 95/31923 A (RAWLINGS) 30 November 1995 Whole document	1 - 7
Y	EP 432 514 A (WILHELM REISGIES GmbH +Co KG) 19 June 1991 Whole document	1 - 7
Y	GB 2 206 275 A (W.R.P.O LIMITED) 5 January 1989 Whole document	1 - 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/AU03/01127

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member			
EP	0826811	FR	2752248		
WO	9322485	BR	9306324	CA	2132970
		EP	0639235	MX	9302550
		US	5368668	US	5308673
EP	0262817	GB	2196296	US	5674226
GB	2360248	AU	41990/01	AU	4950526
		CA	2403185	CA	50487/01
		US	2001044249	EP	1264023
WO	9531923	AU	25318/95	WO	1272700
EP	0432514	DE	3941249	GB	0171079
GB	2206275				
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